

## Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3875

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PEPR, BG, SPOP  
SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH BANGLADESH PRESIDENT ZIA: DEVELOPMENT  
ISSUES

REF: STATE 107370

SUMMARY. DURING MY CONVERSATION WITH BANGLADESH PRESIDENT  
ZIA ON JUNE 17 I SPOKE OF THE URGENT NEED FOR INCREASED  
FOOD PRODUCTION AND MORE EFFECTIVE FAMILY PLANNING IN VIEW  
OF A LIKELY GLOBAL SHORTAGE OF FOOD. I MENTIONED TO HIM  
THREE AREAS OF DIFFICULTY IN HIS FAMILY PLANNING EFFORT.  
HE TALKED OPTIMISTICALLY OF HIS EXPECTATIONS OF BANGLADESH  
AGRICULTURE AND EMPHASIZED GREAT GAINS IN THE AREA OF  
MOTIVATION CONCERNING FAMILY PLANNING. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING MY INITIAL CALLS ON BANGLADESH OFFICIALS WITH  
RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT MATTERS I HAVE TAKEN EVERY  
OPPORTUNITY TO POINT OUT THE URGENT NEED FOR AGRICULTURAL  
DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY PLANNING BECAUSE OF THE PROSPECT  
OF GLOBAL FOOD SHORTAGES. I MADE THESE POINTS TO THE  
ADVISOR FOR FOOD, THE FOOD SECRETARY, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY  
AND VARIOUS OTHER OFFICIALS. I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY OF  
A LONG CONVERSATION WITH BANGLADESH PRESIDENT ZIA ON  
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JUNE 17 TO MAKE THE U.S. POSITION ON THESE ISSUES  
ABUNDANTLY CLEAR.

2. I USED AS A STARTING POINT A COMMENT ZIA HAD MADE ABOUT  
AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENTS WHICH HAD BEEN MADE IN BANGLADESH.  
AGREEING WITH HIM ON HOW IMPORTANT INCREASED FOOD PRODUC-  
TION WAS, I TOLD HIM OF THE HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY THE U.S.

FELT BECAUSE IT WAS THE RESIDUAL SUPPLIER OF FOOD GRAIN TO DEFICIT COUNTRIES. I EXPLAINED THAT ALL PROJECTIONS INDICATED THAT WE COULD NOT CONTINUE DOING THIS FOR LONG AND THAT THERE WOULD BE A GLOBAL FOOD SHORTAGE IF DEFICIT NATIONS DID NOT DO TWO THINGS: INCREASE FOOD PRODUCTION AND CUT POPULATION GROWTH. I SAID THAT HE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT THE HARD POSITION MY STAFF AND I SOMETIMES TOOK WITH HIS GOVERNMENT ON FOOD AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES WERE THE RESULT OF OUR DETERMINATION THAT OUR AID BE FULLY DIRECTED TOWARD INCREASED FOOD PRODUCTION AND IMPROVED FAMILY PLANNING.

3. IN REPLY, ZIA RESUMED HIS COMMENTS ABOUT HIS AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. HE SPOKE OF THE VERY GREAT INCREASES IN PRODUCTION WHICH COULD BE ACHIEVED BY GROWING ANOTHER CROP WITH THE HELP OF IRRIGATION DURING THE WINTER SEASON WHEN, HE SAID, BANGLADESH'S FARMLANDS ARE ONLY 30-40 PERCENT UTILIZED. HE SAID MOST PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED AT THE DRAMATIC INCREASES WHICH COULD BE ACHIEVED, MENTIONING A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS IN WHICH THERE COULD BE A SHARP INCREASE. (AT DINNER LAST WEEK HE HAD SPOKEN OF A POSSIBLE INCREASE IN PRODUCTION OF ELEVEN MILLION TONS A YEAR, OF WHICH ONLY THREE WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION.)

4. I ASKED HIM WHAT OF FAMILY PLANNING. HE SAID, AS HE  
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HAD LAST WEEK, THAT THE MATTER HAD BEEN A MOST DELICATE ONE, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE OF RELIGIOUS ISSUES, AND HE HAD HAD TO PROCEED CAREFULLY. BUT THAT WAS NOW STRAIGHTENED OUT AND NOW THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WERE ON HIS SIDE. THEY WERE CITING THE KORAN TO SUPPORT HIS FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM. NOW FAMILY PLANNING IN BANGLADESH WAS MAKING PROGRESS. BUT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO KEEP PEOPLE WORKING ON FAMILY PLANNING AS THERE WAS MUCH TO DO. I TOLD HIM THAT MY STAFF, WHOSE BUSINESS IT WAS TO FIND PROBLEMS AND TRY TO RESOLVE THEM, TOLD ME THAT THERE WERE TROUBLES IN HIS PROGRAM. THERE WAS A NEED FOR BETTER SUPERVISION, FOR BETTER COOPERATION BETWEEN HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING PERSONNEL AND FOR TECHNICALLY TRAINED PERSONNEL, WHO WERE LEAVING THE COUNTRY. THE PRESIDENT DID NOT SPEAK TO MY POINTS BUT INSTEAD REPLIED THAT THE IMPORTANT THING WAS THAT BANGLADESHIS WERE PREPARED TO ACCEPT FAMILY PLANNING.

5. COMMENT: THERE IS AN AIR OF UNREALITY TO SOME OF ZIA'S COMMENTS ABOUT BOTH AGRICULTURE AND FAMILY PLANNING. WHILE HIS PERSONAL (AND PUBLIC) COMMITMENT IS COMMENDABLE AND HIS DETERMINATION TO PUSH HIS GOVERNMENT TO CARRY OUT THE PROGRAMS HE HAS PROMISED IN

HIS CAMPAIGN IS IMPRESSIVE, HIS ESTIMATES OF WHAT IS  
BEING AND CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED ARE ONLY OPTIMISTIC.  
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